

Texas Baptists continue relief and recovery in wake of disasters

June 5, 2015

SAN MARCOS—Whether they wield chainsaws to clear debris, cook meals for emergency shelters, wash laundry for displaced families or clear mud from flooded houses, [Texas Baptist Men](#) disaster relief volunteers are meeting immediate needs around the state.



A Texas Baptist Men disaster relief mud-out crew works to remove muck and debris from the residence of a San Marcos homeowner. (PHOTO/Ken Camp) Meanwhile, volunteers with [Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery](#) ministry continue to work in tornado-damaged Van, while preparing for long-term recovery efforts in Blanco, Wimberley and Martindale and enlisting workers to help restore a flooded church in Houston.

In Hays County, where the Blanco River overflowed and floods swept away

or damaged more than 1,400 homes, TBM disaster relief officials set up a mobile command post at [Calvary Baptist Church in San Marcos](#) and a field kitchen at [First Baptist Church in San Marcos](#).

Since arriving soon after Memorial Day, the food-service team prepared more than 3,500 meals a day for delivery to shelters and affected homeowners by the Salvation Army and Red Cross, said Chief Cook Gene Hagan from Temple.

Volunteer chaplains, who provide spiritual support alongside relief crews, served in the area with a unit of TBM's box ministry, which ministers by distributing cardboard boxes to displaced residents.



From a field kitchen set up at First Baptist Church in San Marcos, Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers cook meals and pack them in insulated containers for delivery to shelters by American Red Cross and Salvation Army personnel. (PHOTO/Ken Camp) Mud-out teams cleared muck from houses, and other TBM volunteers set up a combination laundry/shower and generator unit. Childcare and asset protection teams also served in the area.

In addition to physical needs, “we’ve seen a lot of spiritual needs,” TBM Volunteer Chaplain Deborah Fowlkes said. “People are devastated emotionally by the loss of homes, memories and material things that you’ve got to move past... a photo album that belonged to my mother—those types of things.”

Often, people just need someone to be with them, to hold their hand and pray, she said.

Volunteer Chaplain Bill Means from West served in San Marcos. After the crews ministered by cleaning out a house or clearing debris, TBM volunteers presented the homeowners with a Bible and token of love—such as a handmade quilt—along with the truth of the gospel, he noted.

“This is the only Jesus some people see,” he said. “It’s such a great witness. It’s God’s people doing God’s work.”



Four chainsaw teams and a food-service crew worked in Henderson, supported by chaplain teams. (Photo courtesy of Glenn Adams) Four chainsaw teams and a food-service crew worked in Henderson, supported by chaplain teams. The

teams have been “vigilantly working” in this area as work orders continue to pour in, said Ben Moberley of Spring Branch, state chainsaw coordinator.

“There was not any part of town that was not hit, at least partially” by the EF-2 tornado May 25, Moberley said, noting more than 250 homes incurred significant damage, 15 were no longer habitable and about 20,000 people were left without electricity.

At the end of the day on June 5, Moberley counted 166 requests for assistance, with 73 jobs completed by the crews.

“We are currently working on Priority 1 jobs,” he said. “Most of those are big trees on houses and very time consuming.”

Additional out-of-state crews have been called to assist because of the sheer volume of work, he told Terry Henderson, state director of TBM Disaster Relief.

“There are enough jobs for weeks,” Moberley said.

In Missouri City, west of Houston, TBM established an incident command post to coordinate relief operations among mud-out crews, a field kitchen, laundry/shower and generator unit, along with chaplain support. Volunteer Ralph Rogers of Amarillo, who has prepared daily situation reports of TBM’s disaster response, said additional states are preparing to send mud-out crews to assist in this area as well.



Joe Henard (left) from Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo and other Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers join in a circle to pray with a San Marcos homeowner after working all day to remove mud and debris from her house. (PHOTO/Ken Camp) By June 4, TBM volunteers had logged nearly 2,000 hours, as relief operations continue to be carried out and assessments are made in locations across the state, Rogers said.

To give to TBM disaster relief, [click here](#) or send a check designated “disaster relief” to Texas Baptist Men, 5351 Catron, Dallas 75227.

Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery ministry continues to meet needs in Van, where a tornado packing wind up to 140 mph destroyed multiple homes.

But the greatest need now is in Wimberley, Blanco and the Martindale community near San Marcos, said Marla Bearden, disaster recovery specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Since they were not in counties designated as federal disaster areas, Martindale and Blanco residents will not receive assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Bearden said.

“We have identified 20 homes in Blanco that didn’t have flood insurance,” she said. “These are low-income residents, most of them elderly.”



Texas Baptist Men volunteer Marvin Cawood from Polk City Baptist Church in Marshall works on the wiring of a flood-damaged home in San Marcos. (PHOTO/Ken Camp)A team from [First Baptist Church in Marble Falls](#) already has started work in Blanco, and additional churches are needed to partner with affected households, she noted.

[First Baptist Church in Dripping Springs](#) will provide housing for volunteers serving in the Wimberley and Martindale areas, and [First Baptist Church in Blanco](#) will house volunteers working in Blanco.

[Baptist Temple in Houston](#) sustained significant loss when its basement flooded. The church was storing furniture, hymnals, educational supplies and many other items in the basement while the church was undergoing reconstruction, Bearden said.

“The building itself sustained some damage, and it will require extensive mold and mildew remediation,” she said. “Unfortunately, the church does not have flood insurance and cannot afford the cost of reconstruction.”

[First Philippine Baptist Church in Missouri City](#) will provide housing for

disaster recovery volunteers in the Houston area.

To sign up or receive more information, contact Bearden at (214) 537-7358 or [click here](#).

Donations for Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery can be mailed to 333 N. Washington,
Dallas 75246 or contributed online [here](#).

With additional reporting by Managing Editor Ken Camp.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was edited June 8 to provide updated information.